

# The Fifth And Sixth Trumpets

## Revelation 9 Notes

### ***The First Woe (vss. 1-12)***

- A star usually symbolizes a great person of high position (cf. 8:10); here, however, it seems not to represent a particular human individual, but Satan. This view is supported by Jesus' statement in Luke 10:18. This star appears as the antithesis to "the bright and morning star" (22:16), and of Him who has the keys of hell and of death (1:18).
- Since the key, a symbol of power, "was given" to him, it is implied that Satan was permitted to open the pit of the abyss, exercising only that degree of power which God allowed; beyond that he cannot operate (cf. Job 1:12; 2:6).
- Dreaded by men, locusts are ravenous destroyers of vegetation, and are used by God as His instrument in an effort to bring men to repentance. The serpents, scorpions and enemies in Luke 10:19 symbolize the forces of spiritual evil in the world which the disciples would overcome and tread under foot.
- The distinction made here between the sealed and those not sealed is further proof that the number 144,000 represents the saints on earth at any point in time, and not a special group of saved persons in the final day (2 Timothy 2:19; 2 Peter 2:9).
- The devil and his agents do not have unlimited power even over evil men, but are restrained within the limits delineated by God. The specific meaning of "five months" is uncertain. It probably indicated the incompleteness of the woe, as the first four trumpets indicated incomplete judgments. The torment inflicted was spiritual and mental; it did not kill, although the pain was intense and the outlook seemed hopeless.
- The ones stung by the locust-scorpions are those who have left God out of their lives and have been polluted by sin. Physical death is no gain to the wicked, for the anguish of soul cannot be relieved by death. This is why they do not commit suicide.
- The locusts of John's vision are as horsemen prepared for war in the camp of the sinners as they represent sin's own destructive force. Sin inflicts pain and culminates in the self-destruction of those involved. The sinner is actually at war against himself. This is the only place in Revelation where the victory crown is used of any other than Christ and the saints. The victory of wickedness is only an imitation of the genuine; it is never lasting or true.

- The hair “as the hair of women” adds to the demoniacal appearance of the locusts. It is probably safer to consider this point as a detail of the general picture of terror and torment rather than to attempt a specific explanation. The locusts’ “teeth of lions” follows Joel’s description of the locust army that God brought upon the land (Joel 1:6).
- The sound should have struck terror in the hearts of the wicked, but they of the earth refused to give heed (vs. 21). Spiritual warfare and destruction were in their midst, and they did not know it. In contrast to the tormented earth-dwellers, those who had the seal of God on their foreheads were secure and had neither fear nor terror.
- Satan, symbolized as a great red dragon having seven diadems (crowns of royalty) on his seven heads (12:3), is thus portrayed as ruling over the realm which is at war with God and His purpose. As the embodiment and source of all that is evil and as the one who brings torment and destruction to wicked men and God’s world, Satan rules over the forces represented by the locusts. No more appropriate names could be given such a one as Destruction and Destroyer, for that is what he is in any language.
- Although the eagle flying in the midst of heaven first announced the three woes to come (8:13), these words concerning the two woes to come are John’s. We have before us a vivid picture of moral and spiritual decay which brings torment to the souls of men. The torment does not kill, but it abides for a definite period. Sin is responsible for bringing this decay into the world, behind which is Satan with his diabolical purpose to destroy.

### ***The Second Woe (vss. 13-21)***

- These trumpet sounds and judgments are in response to the prayers of the saints sent up before God (8:3-5). The saints were looking to God and praying not only for an avenging of their cause but also for the subjugation of the world to God that men might be saved (1 Timothy 2:1-4). Even God’s judgments were meant to contribute to this end by revealing the folly and vanity of all things earthly.
- John’s use of the Euphrates is not geographic but symbolic. God’s forces of vengeance were held in restraint at their border until a time determined by Himself when, under His judgment, the flood would once again overflow the land.
- The four angels of judgment had been prepared for a time fixed in the mind of God, for He determines the appropriate moment (Acts 1:7). With each sounding of a trumpet or a group of trumpets the judgments become progressively intense. At the sound of the first four trumpets a third of each realm is affected; with the fifth trumpet

men are tormented but do not die; now in this sixth judgment a third of mankind is killed.

- The number in vs. 16 is not a literal quantity, but is symbolic of a mighty host, full and complete -- literally, two myriads of myriads (cf. Psalm 68:17; Daniel 7:10). It is a grand total, sufficient to accomplish God's purpose in any judgment at any time.
- In both the Old and New Testaments, brimstone signifies the wrath of God and is used always with reference to judgment and punishment upon the wicked. Its use here is no exception.
- There have been many explanations of the "heads" and "tails," but it seems best to say simply that this great destroying cavalry killed as it marched and left a terrible destruction in its aftermath. Seldom is the poison of war's aftermath completely eradicated; it continues to bear its evil influence.
- It is clear from the description in vs. 20 of those affected that only the wicked, worldly and rebellious against God are included in the one-third who were killed and the two-thirds who were not killed. In these trumpet judgments the saints have not been considered; they are not directly involved.
- In any event, these judgments which God sent upon the world of the ungodly as warnings failed to impress them, for they repented not of the evil works of their hands. In essence, the judgment was against idolatry, the root of their sinful condition.
- The first section of the two categories of sins which brought judgment was idolatry, a violation of all regard and respect for the God of heaven, the creator and ruler of all (vs. 20). The second section (vs. 21) involves man's relationship to man. Moral depravity grows out of idolatry, which expresses a condition of the heart (Mark 7:21).
- God uses the wickedness and brutality of men to destroy the wicked and to achieve His purposes. His use of these forces affords an excellent basis on which to understand Revelation 9:13-21.